

# BY AGENCY

## Government body says travellers can have sites

A GOVERNMENT agency has offered all its land in Basildon district as possible sites for travellers to use.

The Homes and Communities Agency says Basildon Council is considering its offer to set up sites as an alternative to carrying out the eviction of 51 caravan pitches on the huge Dale Farm site, in Crays Hill.

The move has prompted travellers to prepare planning applications for several acres of land bordering the A127 and Pound Lane, Laindon.

They are also likely to apply for two separate sites in the Gardiners Lane South area of Basildon, where a plan to build 3,000 homes was shelved earlier this year.

The land offer was made after talks with the council and campaigners acting for the travellers, which the Echo understands took place at County Hall, Chelmsford on August 3.

A spokesman for the Homes

### EXCLUSIVE

By JON AUSTIN

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and Communities Agency – formerly the Commission for New Towns – one of the major landowners in the district, said: “We have suggested to Basildon Council all our land in the district could be considered.

“It was a private meeting and it is still under consideration, so we can't really say anything further.”

She declined to give details of all the agency land holdings in the district, saying the information was not readily available because it owned so much land.

However, the agency owns a number of large sites, including several acres off Dry Street, once earmarked for 1,200 homes, land between Endeavour Drive and the Mayflower retail park, and parts of the Craylands estate.

Grattan Puxon, leading travellers campaigner, said the agency had actively encouraged them to put forward planning applications.

He said: “At the meeting, the council made it clear it did not want to see more sites developed in Basildon, but the agency has advised us to draw up the applications. Plans have been drawn up for a 20-pitch

site at Pound Lane, Laindon, which will go in shortly.

“As a result of the Hovefields eviction, we are also hurriedly trying to prepare applications for two smaller sites in the Gardiners Lane area.”

He added the agency had provided detailed plans of the land it owned at Gardiners Lane and Pound Lane to aid preparation of planning applications.

He said families now parked on the Selex sports ground had agreed to leave Hovefields to go there.

He hoped if an application went in before the families left the site, it might count as grounds to allow them to stay until it was considered.

He added: “Unfortunately, we chose a piece of ground which is being leased by the agency to Selex and is occupied, so we may have to find agency land in the area which is currently unoccupied.”

Tony Ball, council leader, said he was aware the agency had been looking at possible sites, but the council's policy was not to consider such sites unless other Essex councils agreed to do the same.

He added: “I received a letter from Grattan Puxon, with drawings of sites for Gardiners Lane and Pound Lane, but I have no knowledge of the agency encouraging travellers to put in plans.”



■ New home – travellers on the Selex Sports and Leisure Club site  
Picture: LUAN MARSHALL BA35403 17

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## Slow Hovefields clean-up

THE last family to be evicted from the Hovefields traveller site in Wickford is now living a few hundred yards away – on another illegal plot.

John Ox and Kathleen Rooney were the last family to leave on Tuesday morning.

They simply towed their caravans to one of the few remaining empty pitches on the site not subject to an eviction order.

Basildon Council is now considering what action to take.

An elderly woman also left the camp on Tuesday morning and is believed to have moved to another part of Essex.

Two of the plots were empty when bulldozers went in to clear the site. Two more were vacated the same day, with their occupants moving to a car park in Gardiners Way.

Cathrine McCann, 22, who, on Tuesday, vowed to stay on site, moved late that evening and is believed to have gone



■ Clean-up – a digger working at the Hovefields site

to her sister's pitch in Hovefields Avenue, Wickford.

Council leader Tony Ball said the operation would continue all week, as breaking up concrete laid for the caravans was proving harder than anticipated.

He said: “Following the

start of clearance of illegal pitches in Hovefields Drive, we are satisfied with progress.

“It is disappointing we have had to take direct action, but we are pleased the travellers have vacated the site peacefully.”

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# Meet Spot

## Saturday 11th September

The children's favourite will be appearing at various intervals between 11am and 3pm, with face painting fun!



Waterstone's and hmv  
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